New Chief Executive to take agriculture into the future

Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia
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New Chief Executive to take agriculture into the future

The appointment of Graeme Robertson as Chief Executive Officer of the Government agencies involved in agriculture is a milestone in the delivery of services to the agricultural sector in Western Australia.

Dr Robertson will head up an organisation committed to strengthening the State’s position and reputation as a leading producer of high quality agricultural products. His appointment follows the most comprehensive review ever undertaken of the Government’s role in supporting agriculture.

Dr Robertson said the changes underway would produce an organisation which was more dynamic and business-like in its approach and which had a closer working relationship with the industries it served.

“The aim is to ensure that we are able to respond to industry needs in a much more flexible manner and able to mobilise resources to take best advantage of opportunities as they arise. There will also be a much sharper focus on customer requirements with the objective of more closely aligning the activities of the organisation with the goals of the agricultural industry.”

“The key to many of the new directions will be a strengthened partnership between producers, agribusiness and the community in setting strategic directions and priorities. This will mean a strong emphasis on industry involvement in strategic planning and the use of project teams at an operational level.”

Dr Robertson will lead a six-person executive team which will be responsible for ensuring the delivery of effective, efficient and timely services through 10 new programs. These are:

- sustainable rural development (including the responsibilities of the Soil and Land Conservation Council, the Rural Adjustment and Finance Corporation and farming systems integration);
- industry resource protection (integrating the role of the Agriculture Protection Board with other protection and regulation functions of the agencies);
- cereal products;
- wool;
- meat products;
- dairy and other animal products;
- grain legume and oilseeds;
- new industries;
- horticulture; and,
- trade and market development.

Dr Robertson said research and development would continue to be a major activity of the organisation.

“Research and development will be more strongly linked to the achievement of agency objectives in relation to market focus, sustainability, protection, systems integration and industry support.

“We will also establish closer working relationships (particularly at the strategic level) with all other research groups to ensure that maximum benefit is obtained from every dollar invested in research.”
Dr Robertson said decentralisation and regionalisation of functions would also be an important priority for the new organisation.

"The many factors contributing to the shape of the new organisation will ensure its activities reflected the shift in the agricultural sector from producing commodities to producing specific products to meet market requirements."

Western Australia's Primary Industry Minister Monty House (left) and new CEO Graeme Robertson are committed to developing a dynamic and commercial approach to the delivery of Government services to agriculture.

Profile

Graeme Robertson followed an honours degree in agricultural science at the University of Western Australia with a PhD in plant physiology at Oxford University in the United Kingdom. He was Western Australia's Rhodes Scholar in 1971.

Dr Robertson joined the Department of Agriculture in 1969 and his career has involved a wide range of research, development and management activities in agriculture, including Director of the Division of Resource Management and Commissioner of Soil and Land Conservation.

Dr Robertson was appointed Deputy Director General of Agriculture in 1990. Also in that year he was appointed as the inaugural chairperson of the Land and Water Resources Research and Development Corporation and is currently chairperson of the National Rangelands Strategy Working Group.